A Community-Based Vision Plan

Village of Churchville, NY

RRCDC
ROCHESTER REGIONAL
COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

Produced by the
Rochester Regional Community Design Center

March 2007

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Acknowledgements

The RRCDC thankfully acknowledges the important contributions of people and organizations who were involved with or supported the charrette planning, the charrette event and the post-charrette process. We also are grateful to those who contributed funding towards the charrette project and to those individuals and organizations who financially support the Design Center, helping to make the Churchville and other charrettes possible.

Thank you to the Village of Churchville Steering Committee and the Village Board of Trustees; Nancy Steedman and Ron Belczak for their direct contributions to this report; City Blue Imaging Services for their contributed services; and the many others who have generously been involved in this process.

We also thank the members of the Churchville Design Team: Amy Priestly; Linda Phillips, AICP; Joni Monroe, AIA; Michelle Rook, AIA; Tim Raymond, AIA; Roger Brown, AIA. A Special Thank You to the American Institute of Architects - Rochester Chapter and to the City of Rochester for contributing funds that made the Churchville Charrette possible.

About the RRCDC

The mission of the non-profit Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRCDC) is to act as a multifaceted resource center to assist municipalities and citizens of the Greater Rochester Region to define, understand, promote and implement concepts of design excellence and sustainability for the public realm and built environment.

One of our most effective means of civic engagement is the community design charrette, an intensive, participatory planning process that brings together a variety of community stakeholders to observe and share ideas about their community. Together they produce tangible steps towards achieving neighborhood consensus for a community vision. As facilitator, we work with a Steering Committee of neighborhood representatives to plan the charrette, provide design professionals at the event to help translate citizens' ideas into physical drawings, and follow through with those initial ideas to create a final set of plans and recommendations for the community.

Since we began our work as the AIA Rochester Urban Design Committee (UDC) in 1998, the group has facilitated over twenty community design charrettes, including the Center City Charrette that resulted in a community-based vision for Rochester's downtown, and the University Avenue Charrette that resulted in construction of the award-winning ARTWalk project. In 2004, we officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and continue to serve our region as we seek to grow, ourselves.

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Executive Summary

A community-based "Vision Plan" for the Village of Churchville has been prepared by the RRCDC in order to provide written and visual urban design plans that reflect the goals and ideas of community members for revitalization of their community including their neighborhoods, the central business district and the open and agricultural spaces in and around the village.

The final Vision Plan incorporates ideas suggested by over one hundred community members who attended the Village of Churchville Community Design Charrette, held on May 5th and 6th, 2006, and expresses these ideas as elements of good design and planning for healthy, viable communities. The process of creating the plan began over a year ago when the village steering committee began working toward the charrette with the RRCDC. This Post-Charrette work to create a Vision Plan was carried out during the summer and fall of 2006.

The Vision Plan features overlays on base plans, each including recommendations for design and development strategies for areas within the Village of Churchville charrette area. The Vision Plan also includes detailed drawings which show how the implemented scheme would look and feel from a user's perspective. The primary recommendations in the plan are based on guiding design concepts which were expressed as important by community members at the charrette. These concepts include creating a strong identity for the village, respecting and highlighting its historic and natural resources, strengthening continuity by employing a design theme (especially for the CBD and four corners of the village), creating and accentuating gateways into the village center, increasing connectivity within the village, and development along Black Creek for recreational purposes and preservation of natural resources.

In providing public access to Black Creek, it was important to delineate the edge between the town and the village, plan for development of land where appropriate and a growth strategy plan for the village and the town. Numerous other proposed improvements are detailed within this report in the “Vision Plan” section.

The Vision Plan will serve as, among other things, a guide for the community as they seek to implement the recommended changes. The RRCDC is available to offer technical design assistance as the Village embarks upon a series of steps towards implementation of the Vision Plan.

Introduction

On May 5 and 6, 2006, over one hundred community members and stakeholders from Churchville gathered with professional designers to exchange ideas and contribute towards a common vision for the future of the Village. The drawings and ideas generated at the charrette were subsequently analyzed, synthesized, and translated into tangible plans for development.

This report chronicles the processes before and after the charrette, provides a record of the community ideas from the charrette and shows and describes the final Vision Plan, which was developed by the RRCDC Design Studio based on those ideas. Each section of the report explores a different aspect of the community or the process involved in creating and implementing a Vision Plan.

RRCDC staff compiled the Churchville Charrette Report in late 2006 and early 2007. The report is intended as a resource for members of the municipal government of Churchville as well as residents, business-owners and others intending to develop or improve properties in the Village of Churchville and surrounding areas. It may also serve as a resource for other citizens and communities interested in exploring how a charrette process can help them approach community development in a more inclusive manner. The report is part of an historic record of Churchville's physical and community revitalization process, a documentation of the efforts of the RRCDC and active neighborhood groups and a testament to the powers of citizen engagement and community based planning.

Charrette Steering Committee Member Organizations

Village of Churchville

Rochester Regional Community Design Center

Churchville Fire Department

Chamber of Commerce

Interfaith Council of Churches

Lions Club

Union Congregational Church

Local Businesses

Boy Scouts of America

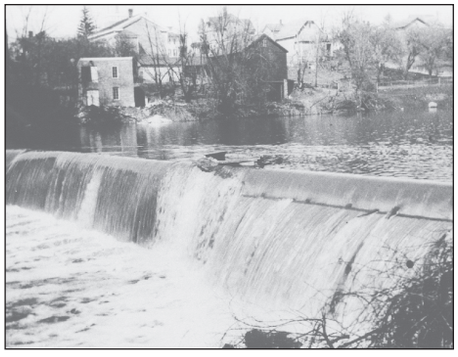
Assemblywoman Susan John

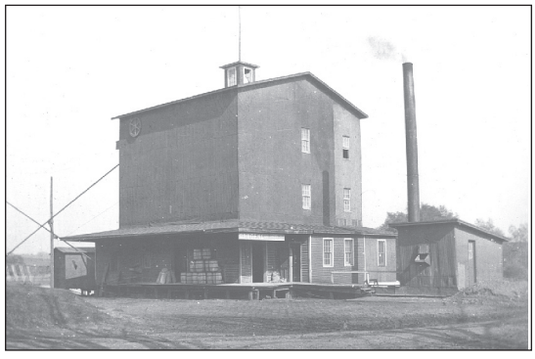
State Senator Jim Alesi

Monroe County Legislator Robert Colby

Residents

History of the Village of Churchville



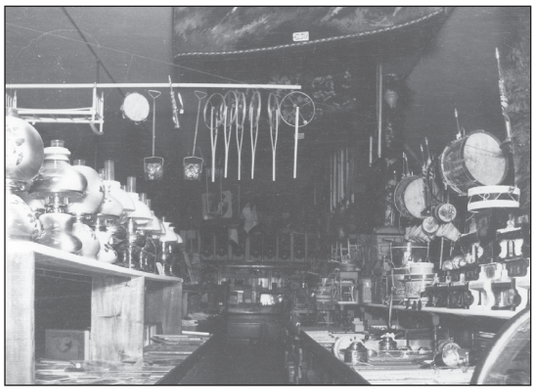


In 1806, Samuel Church purchased 897 acres of land in what was then known as West Pultney, marking the beginning of Churchville's history. (It would not be until 1852 that the village was officially recognized as "Churchville"). In 1808, Church built a saw mill along the banks of Black Creek, followed by a grist mill in 1810, establishing Churchville as a flour milling site of national importance. 1811 saw the construction of Buffalo Road, connecting the newly developing Churchville to Leroy, Batavia, and Rochester.

While the war of 1812 briefly stunted further development, Linus Pierson opened the area's first store immediately after the war's resolution in 1815. By the time the Tonawanda Railroad came through the village in 1837, Churchville sported a wool-carding manufactory, several public houses and taverns, multiple doctor's offices, and a host of specialty shops.

Initially a passenger-only line, the Tonawanda Railroad soon began carrying postal and freight trains and proved integral to the maturation of the budding village. The railroad brought curious travelers, commerce, and many job opportunities for the locals (especially during the Civil War).

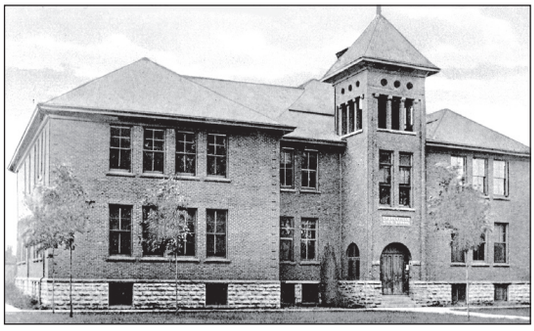
By 1835, the impact of the railroad on Churchville's physical development became evident to locals. The Rochester Daily Democrat newspaper commented, "Since the location of the railroad, a large number of village lots have been laid out and sold at prices varying from $100.00 to $500.00 per lot (one-quarter acre)... What the canal has been to Brockport, the railroad will be to Churchville."



Indeed, between the railroad and the mills, Churchville enjoyed a period of development and prosperity during the mid 1800s. This growth was reflected in the village's public realm. In an 1896 article from the Rochester Post Express, the author details the village's "well shaded streets" and "large business blocks", indicating a walkable community with a well-defined commercial core. A 1906 article found in the Batavia Times describes a speed restriction ordinance implemented by the village trustees to slow the tourist-driven traffic on Buffalo Street, suggesting that early automobile-oriented development was discouraged in the community.

Churchville still boasts a number of its historic buildings from the 1800s and early 1900s, including the historic flour mill (moved to its current location on South Main Street in 1914) and the River-side Box Factory - today the site of the Luster-Coate Factory.

Despite the growth that occurred in the 19th century, the declining importance of the railroad and rising 'culture of cars' altered the development of the community, both socially and spatially. According to one local historian, "In many ways we're still a bedroom community." Though the town hasn't grown as much as initially expected, the mill still operates and the village enjoys a unique sense of identity based in its history.



Churchville Today

Located in the northern part of the Town of Riga, the Village of Churchville in Monroe County, NY, is nearly 15 miles west of the City of Rochester. The 1.1 square miles that make up the village are home to approximately 1,900 citizens.

The village is bounded immediately north by the Churchville County Park, and further North lies the town of Ogden. The village's southern border is marked by highway I-490. To the east lies Chili, and to the west, the Monroe/Genesee county line and Village of Bergen. Churchville is largely a residential village and many of its residents commute to work in the City of Rochester.

There are four main 'gateways' into the village, located outside the core area of existing development: one located to the south on South Main Street near I-490; another to the north on North Main Street past the Kendall Road intersection; the third to the east at the intersection of Buffalo Street and Washington Street; and lastly to the west by the intersection of West Buffalo Street and Sanford Road North.

The intersection of Buffalo Street (NY-33) and Main Street (NY-36) is considered the village center. This area, known as the Central Business District (CBD), houses a number of successful, locally owned businesses like the Johnson House and the Bean & Bin. Historic private residences of significant vernacular architecture add to the old-town atmosphere of the district.

Several challenges face the physical environment in the CBD. Challenges include dealing with auto-oriented development such as gas stations, creating more connections from CBD to other areas of the village and improving accessibility for a variety of vehicles and pedestrians.

Black Creek is one of Churchville's most prominent natural features, considered a point of pride and potential. The wider part of this Genesee River tributary lies within the Churchville County Park, south of which Black Creek winds through the village, to the east of Main Street. Both public and private properties line its banks. While too shallow for most recreational uses, it is currently used for fishing and canoeing at some points, and has potential for development of other uses.

Some additional challenges facing Churchville's built environment that will be addressed through the charrette and post-charrette processes include unifying the CBD with a common design theme, working to preserve and promote the unique aspects of Churchville's identity, creating appropriate development plans for underutilized areas and capitalizing on the local wetland areas for appropriate preservation and recreational uses.

Charrette Coordination and Planning

Charrette coordination was guided by a Churchville Charrette Steering Committee, composed of representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups working in conjunction with the RRCDC. The Charrette process began in September 2005 when members of the Village of Churchville Steering Committee contacted RRCDC about the possibility to host a charrette. Churchville citizens and government leaders Nancy Steedman and Diana Pusateri had attended a charrette hosted by RRCDC for the Hamlet of Williamson, NY which inspired them to pursue a similar process for Churchville. The Village Board of Trustees voted to fund the community-wide charrette project in its entirety and appointed Nancy Steedman to Chair the process.

Steering Committee members represented a variety of Churchville stakeholders including the Village of Churchville, Union Congregational Church, local businesses, Boy Scouts of America, Suburban News, Assemblywoman Susan John, State Senator Jim Alesi, Monroe County Legislator Robert Colby and The Rochester Regional Community Design Center.

From that point on, a Steering Committee met bimonthly, once with the RRCDC and once by themselves, to coordinate for the charrette. During meetings and walking tours with the RRCDC, much of the discussion and planning focused on the topics to be covered during the design charrette. The groups defined the charrette focus areas and identified major design concerns based on an assessment of the existing assets and problem areas. The Steering Committee also helped to plan the structure of and coordinated for the logistics of the event itself.

The Publicity subcommittee undertook a major outreach campaign to engage village residents in the process. Steering Committee members gave educational presentations on the upcoming charrette to a variety of groups including the Interfaith Council of Churches, the Lions Club, the Churchville Fire Department, and the Chamber of Commerce. Placemats were printed and distributed to all of the local restaurants, church dinners and Explorer Scout dinners; several tri-fold pamphlets were distributed over the course of the year; yard signs were placed throughout the community; and information was inserted in monthly utility billings to homeowners. Articles and paid ads were featured in local newspapers and town and village newsletters. Word of mouth was also an effective publicity tool throughout the year of planning.

To plan and carry out the charrette required many hours of intensive work over 9 months on the part of the Steering Committee members. The time commitment from individuals was both a major challenge and a necessary ingredient in the charrette process.

The Charrette Event

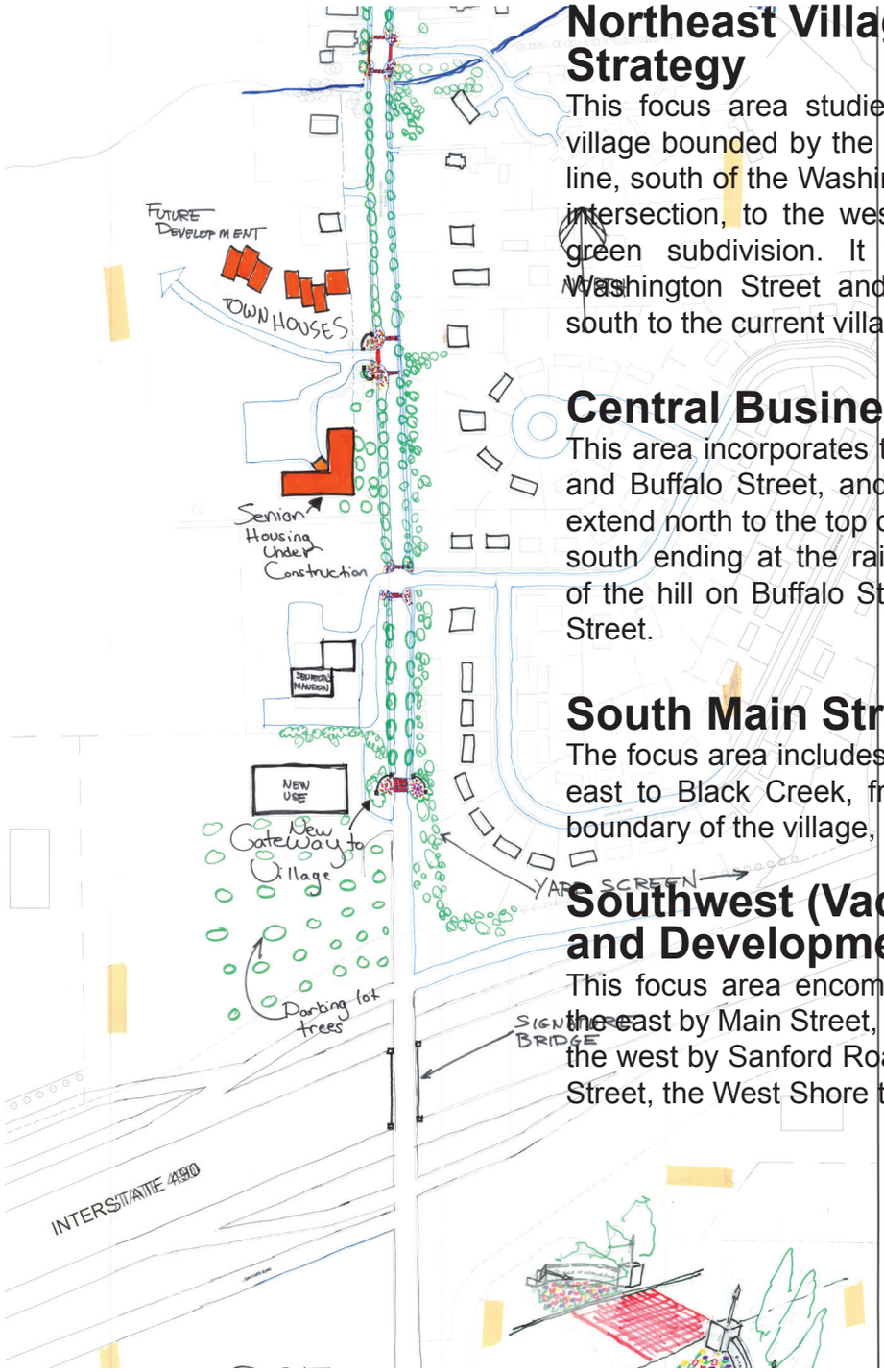
The charrette event commenced at the Union Congregational United Church of Christ in Churchville on the evening of Friday, May 5th, 2006. Keynote speaker Thomas Hylton, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and leader of the Pennsylvania-based non-profit, Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, gave a kick-off presentation focusing on the relationships between vibrant villages and preservation of open space.

The following morning, participants returned to the church for the day-long charrette session. Approximately 20 design professionals serving as facilitators and over 80 community members were randomly assigned to study groups comprised of two facilitators and six to eight community members each, with two study groups for each of the six focus areas.

After welcoming remarks in the morning, study groups toured their assigned focus areas, observing and noting the current layouts and physical characteristics. People took special note of the spatial/design aspects that they would like to keep, in addition to aspects which could be improved by planning techniques. The groups returned to the church in the afternoon for a working lunch. They brainstormed ideas for future development through open discussion, note-taking, and visual representation. Facilitators and residents alike recorded ideas on large notepads and base-maps.

The charrette closed with a presentation from each study group to share the group's ideas with the entire charrette crowd. Following the event, all materials produced were taken by the RRCDC to a Rochester-based architectural firm, SWBR, to be scanned and digitized.

Charrette Focus Areas



Northeast Village Growth Strategy

This focus area studies the northeast edge of the village bounded by the southern commercial property line, south of the Washington Street and Buffalo Road intersection, to the western edge of the Churchville green subdivision. It includes all land bordering Washington Street and Gilman Road, and extends south to the current village limits.

Central Business District

This area incorporates the intersection of Main Street and Buffalo Street, and Black Creek. Its boundaries extend north to the top of the hill on north Main Street, south ending at the railroad tracks, west by the top of the hill on Buffalo Street and to the east at Baker Street.

South Main Street

The focus area includes South Main Street, extending east to Black Creek, from Fitch Street to the south boundary of the village, south of route 490.

Southwest (Vacant) Land Use and Development

This focus area encompasses the land bordered on the east by Main Street, on the south by route I-490, on the west by Sanford Road and on the north by Buffalo Street, the West Shore tracks and North Street.

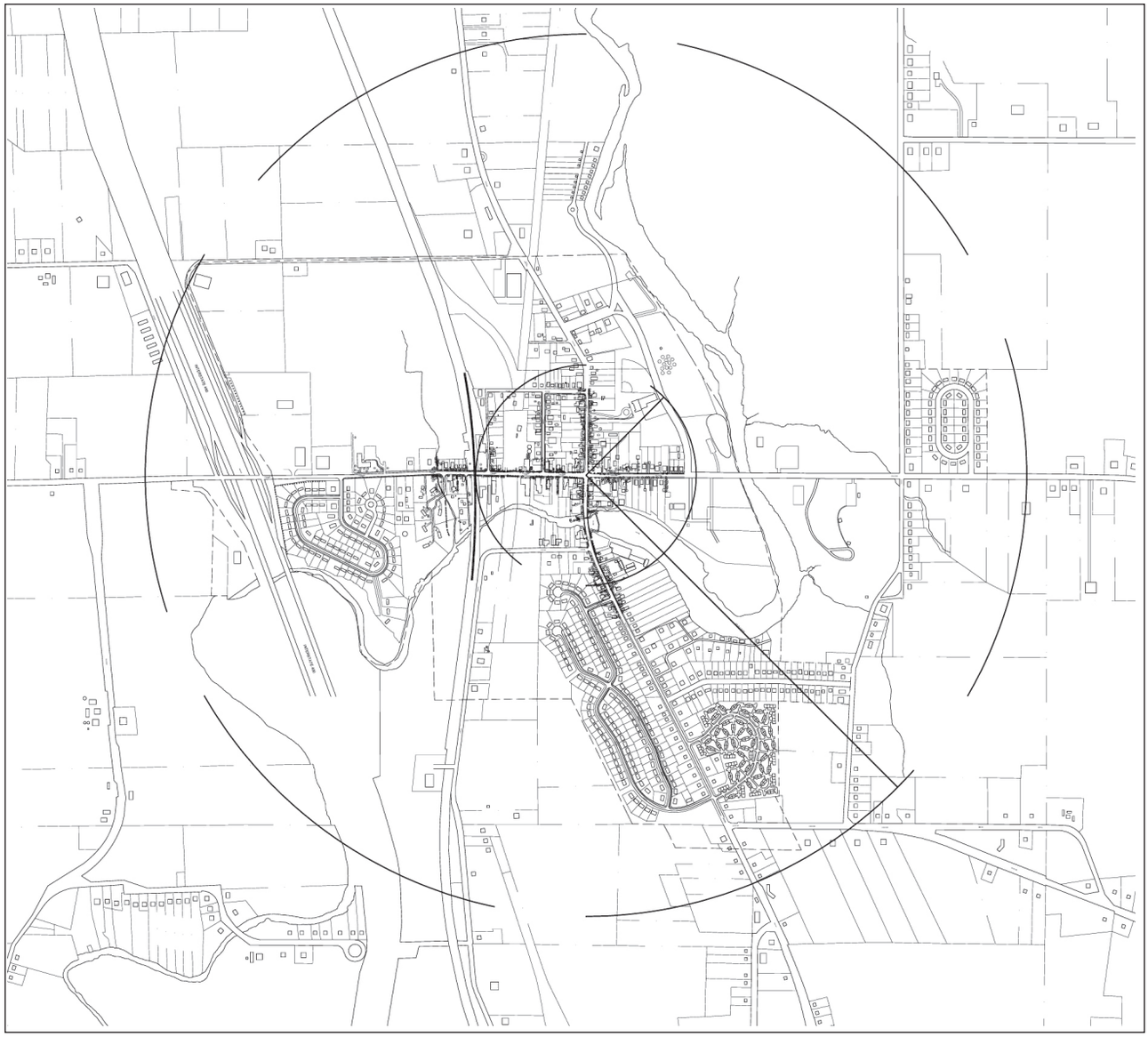
Black Creek and Recreational Land-Use

This focus area includes Black Creek and the land available for development along its edges. It also includes all current and potential community recreational areas and trails throughout the village.

Village Overlay Strategies

This area covers all land within a one mile radius of the Buffalo Road/ Main Street intersection.

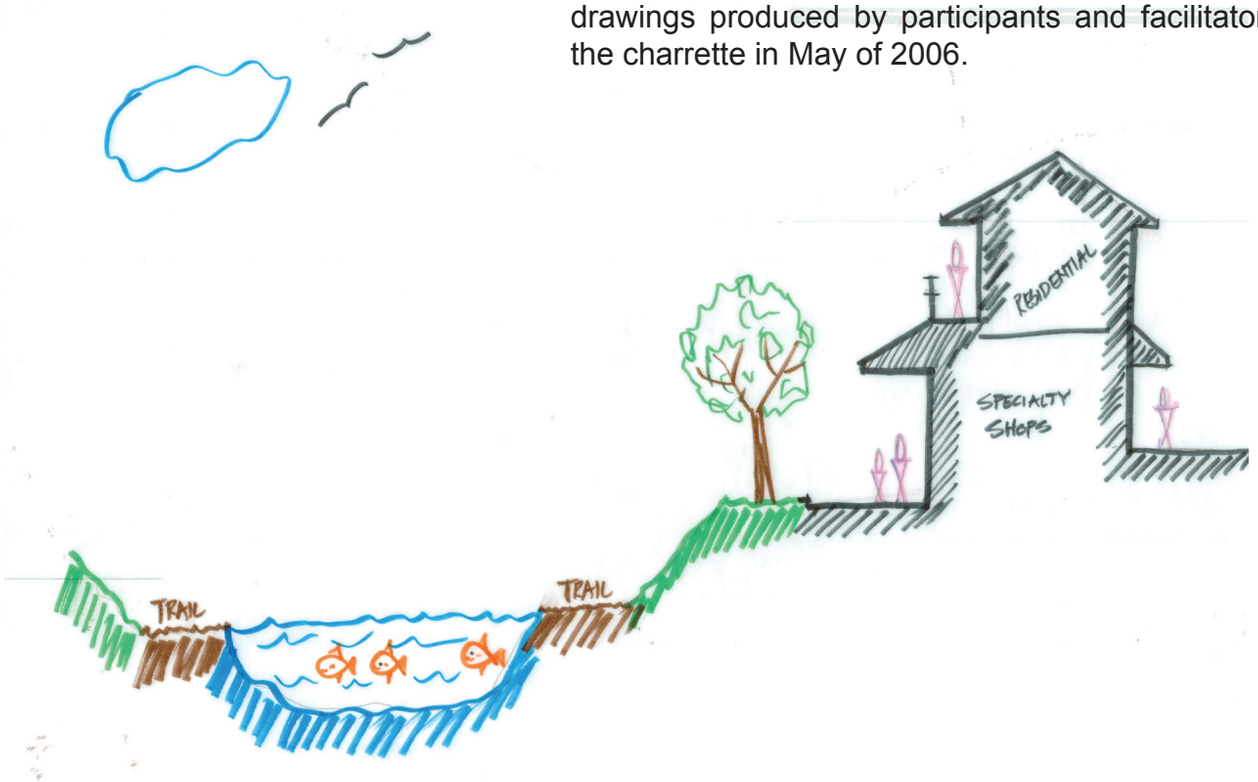
Charrette Area Base Map



Charrette Results

The collaborative efforts of citizens and design professionals produced a wide array of insights, critiques, and suggestions regarding the development of Churchville's public realm and built environment. Though each focus group explored different physical areas of the village and were directed towards different topics, several common themes are evident throughout all the resulting suggestions. In some cases, the same specific ideas evolved independently in multiple groups.

The following pages present general guidelines extrapolated from the charrette ideas, and compare specific ideas and drawings generated by the charrette focus groups. The renderings on these pages are actual drawings produced by participants and facilitators at the charrette in May of 2006.



Community-Based Guiding Principles for Development

Design for pedestrian safety

Create a sense of place and identity, in part through a unique village design theme

Plan for mixed use

Respect and restore historic and vernacular architecture

Improve accessibility and connections for a variety of transportation choices

Establish strong gateways

Redevelop and enhance recreational spaces

Encourage infill development

Central Business District

Focus Area 1: This area incorporates the intersection of Main Street and Buffalo Street, and Black Creek. Its boundaries extend north to the top of the hill on north Main Street, south ending at the railroad tracks, west by the top of the hill on Buffalo Street and to the east at Baker Street.

Goals:

- Create a design theme for CBD, including Black Creek, which aesthetically unites the businesses and historic architecture already present. The theme should express a unique village identity, exploring characteristics such as street-tree patterns, banners, storefront presentation, signage, etc.
- Develop gateway strategies for the four "corners" of the village core, thus marking arrival into the village center.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Address concerns about the future development of the "Star of the West" and other business zones, including the Churchville Tire area.

Develop strategies for the business areas, as well as the municipal parking lot and Elmcrest apartments.

Plan a future use for the current fire house, perhaps for a community center. Add a restaurant at the lot across from the firehouse, in the same style and architectural character.

Improve the pedestrian experience and highlight Black Creek by building a boardwalk along it, with a new gazebo.

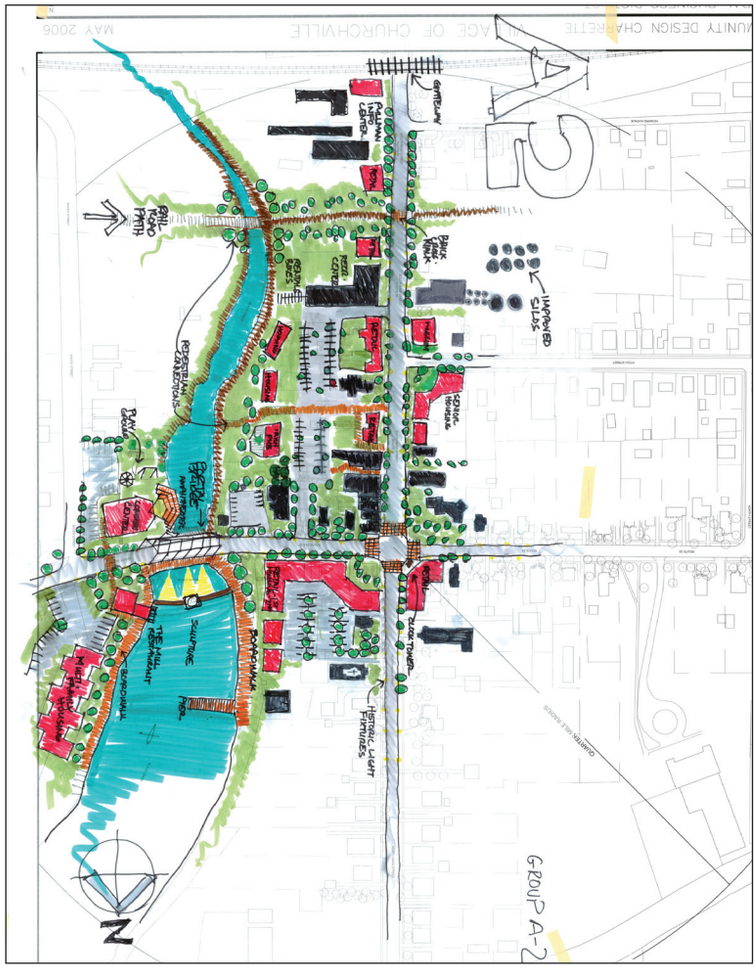
Add infill development in the CBD. Possible locations include the vacant land near the Bean & Bin, next to Churchville Tire, Marylin's [Arrowmart], and the streetscape gap between the Johnson House and the funeral home.

Design a new village logo; themes could include a mill stone, clock tower, or a floweret.

Create a replacement building that meets the sidewalk (with pumps to the side) at Four Corners.

Expand commercially zoned buildings at the vacant lots south of Four Corners.

Modify traffic patterns in and out of the gas station at Four Corners, and make pedestrian improvements such as fences, crosswalks, and plantings.



Northeast Village Growth Strategies

Focus Area 2: The northeast edge of the village bounded by the southern commercial property line, south of the Washington Street and Buffalo Road intersection, to the western edge of the Churchville Greene subdivision.

Goals:

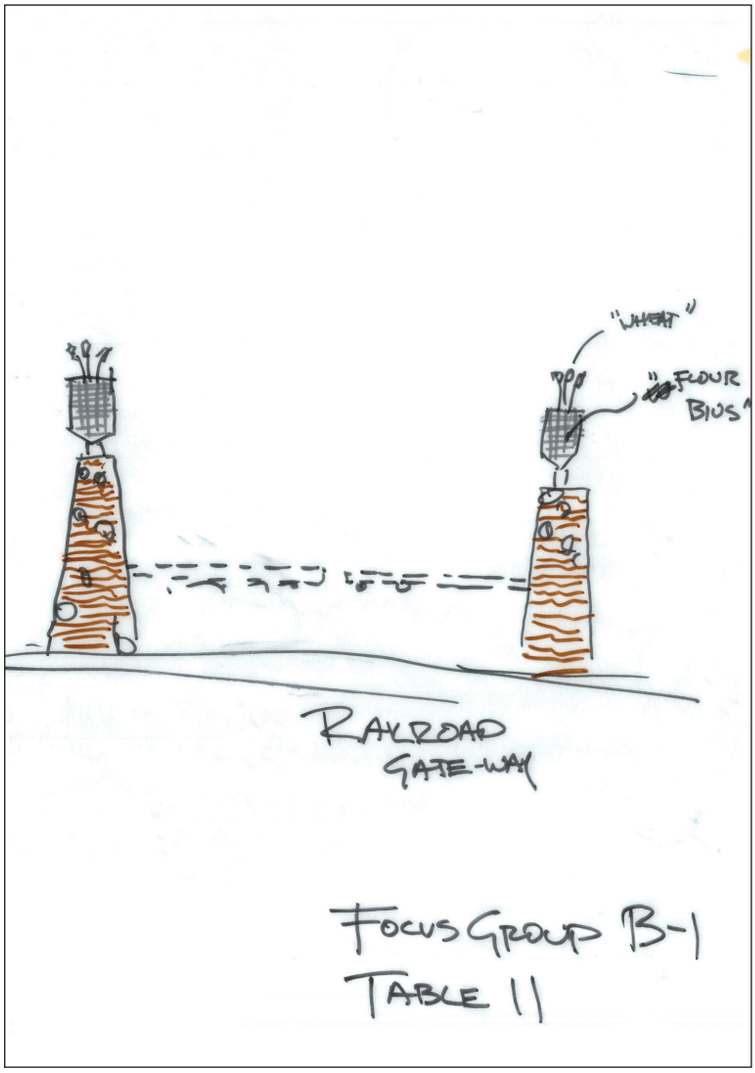
- Clearly delineate the edge between the town and the village, including a strategy for annexation (mark a village growth boundary).
- Create gateways to provide a sense of arrival into the village, stregthen connection within the village and increase/preserve green space.
- Devise clear and pointed land-use and growth plans.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Centralize commercial enterprises within the CBD- not along the edge, which detriments both effects of the village core and the edge.

Annex residential property along Washington Street and Gilman Road are areas of concern.

Construct off-street parking for Gilman Road, and/or a cul de sac at the end of Gilman and extend Willowbank Drive out to Gilman Road.

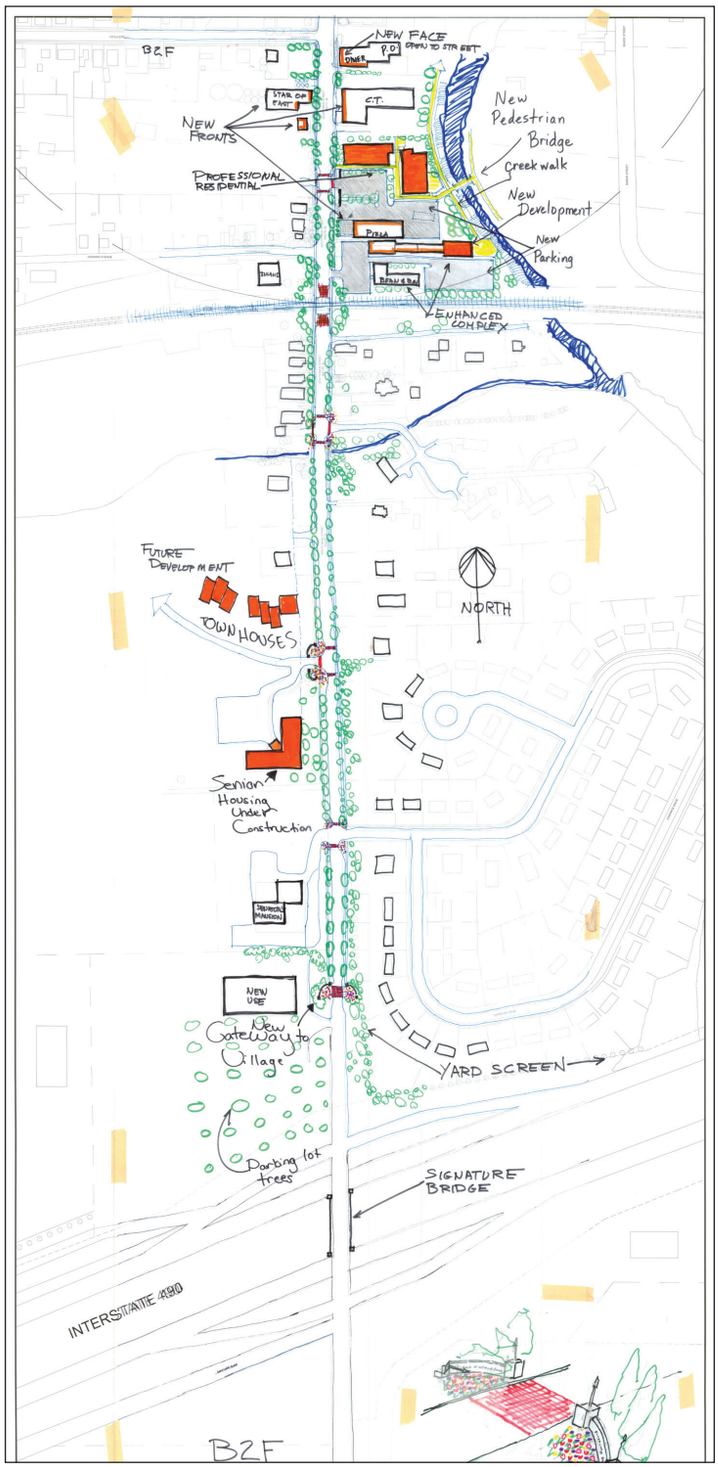


Add new signage in the county park.

Create a walkway connecting Washington Street to the park via the back side of Churchville Greene through Ridgefield Drive along the eastside of the creek.

Grow a community garden along the building fronts for the entrances at Washington and Buffalo.

Improve areas zoned for business, including the Louis Landscape/ Barnard site and Wilkin's site.



South Main Street

Focus Area 3: The focus area includes South Main Street, extending east to Black Creek, from Fitch Street to the south boundary of the village, south of route 490.

Goals:

- Increase this street's commercial viability by devising gateways and creating a "district" character along South Main Street.
- Create the basis for a form based code for Main Street.
- Improve connections to Black Creek.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Repave South Main at the railroad crossing, so it is smoother and utilizes a different material.

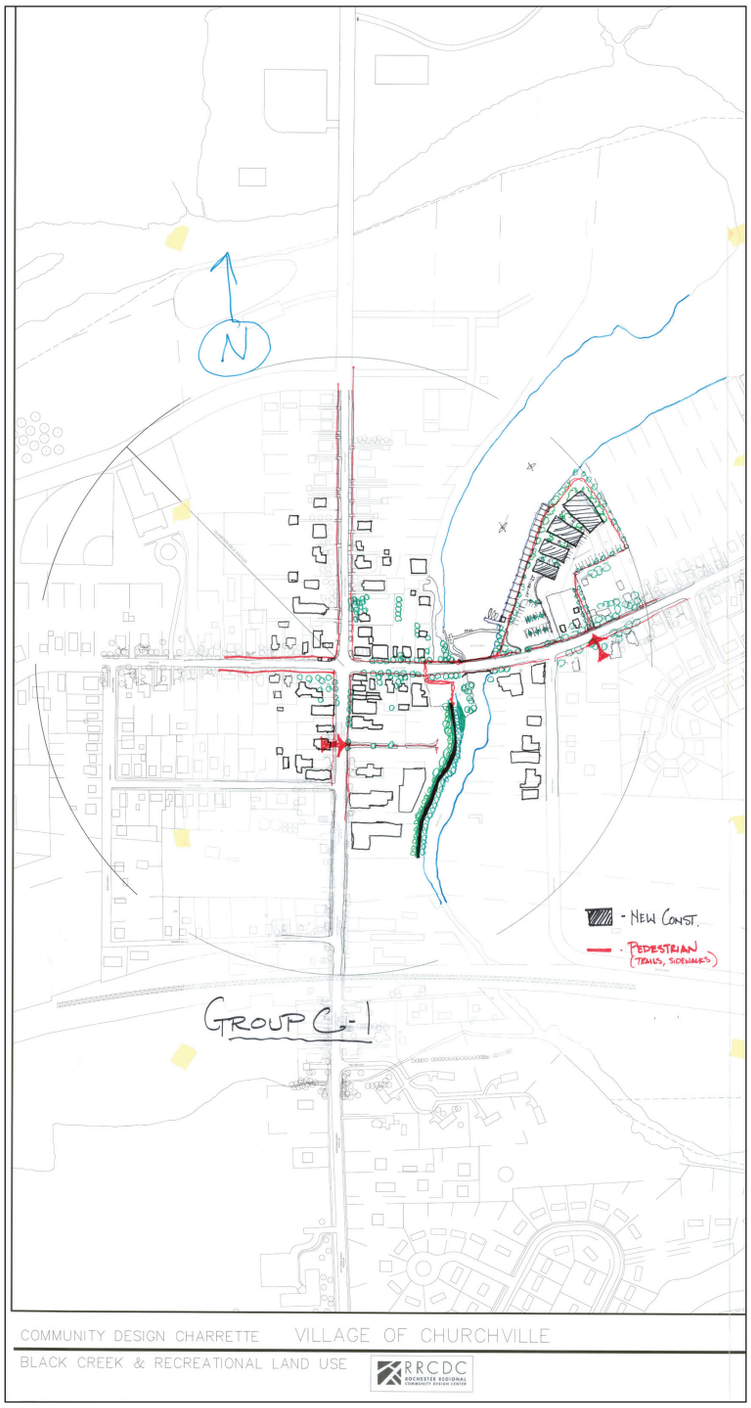
Calm traffic and build more pedestrian crosswalks.

Add more trees along Main Street.

Beautify I-490 exchange green area – safety and aesthetics are a concern.

Move the wires underground, just before the railroad.

Utilize the abandoned 1907 railroad bridge crossing to join the area behind Churchville Tire to points across Black Creek.



Southwest (Vacant) Land Use

Focus Area 4: This focus area encompasses the land bordering on the east by Main Street, on the south by route I-490, on the west by Sanford Road and on the north by Buffalo Street, the West Shore tracks and North Street.

Goals:

- Create a unified plan for land-use and development along the South Main Street edge.
- Devise strategies for strengthening boundaries to differentiate village from rural areas, considering development along I-490 and ways to buffer between railroad tracks and current development.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Connect Sanford Road to South Main Street.

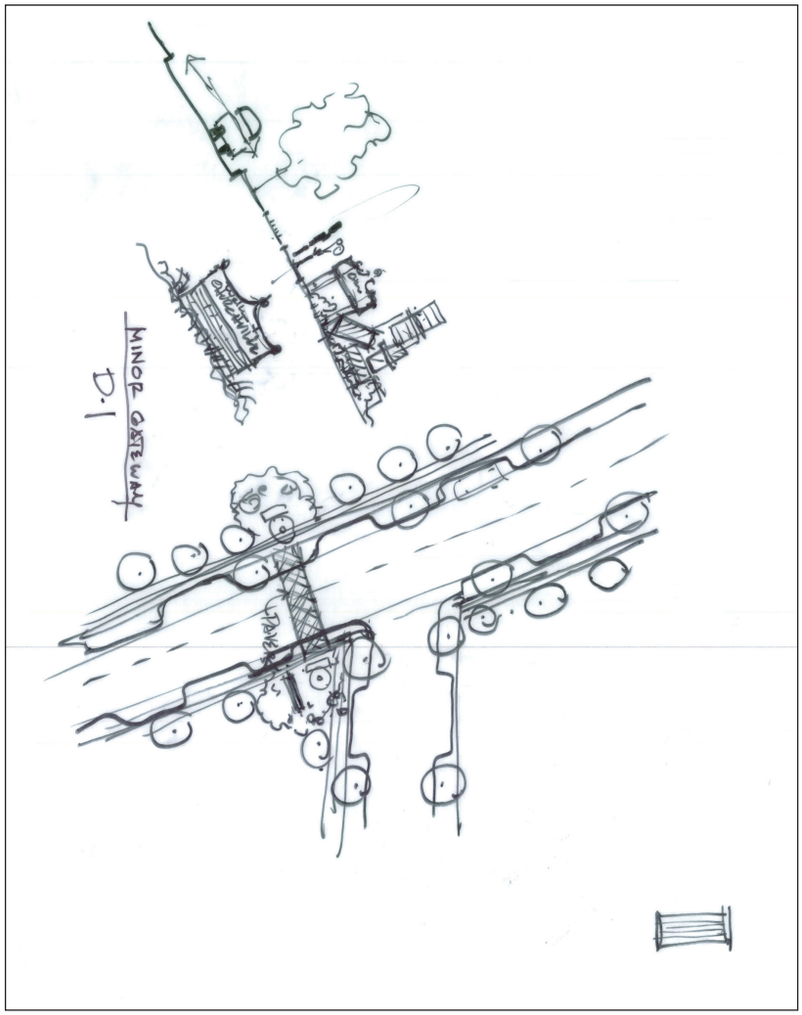
Utilize 'Focal Point' or 'Vista Terminus' landmark creation strategies.

Preserve historic Senator's mansion.

Form based code development.

Better coordinate with the town while planning future development.

Add trees to one side of Sanford road; make a horse fence on the other side.



Black Creek Recreational Land Use

Focus Area 5: This focus area includes Black Creek and the land available for development along its edges. It also includes all current and potential community recreational areas and trails throughout the village.

Goals:

- Develop a unified plan for recreational land-use that capitalizes on natural landscape features of the area, while retaining (and even enhancing) its public access possibilities.
- Consider retail and restaurant development along the creek, outline waterfront development guidelines, and provide for a diversity of users (youth, seniors, ADA).

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Create youth recreation facilities (the present lack results in graffiti and destruction of property).

Encourage native water fowl by providing nesting boxes and working to maintain their wetland ecosystem.

Preserve some space as forever wild.

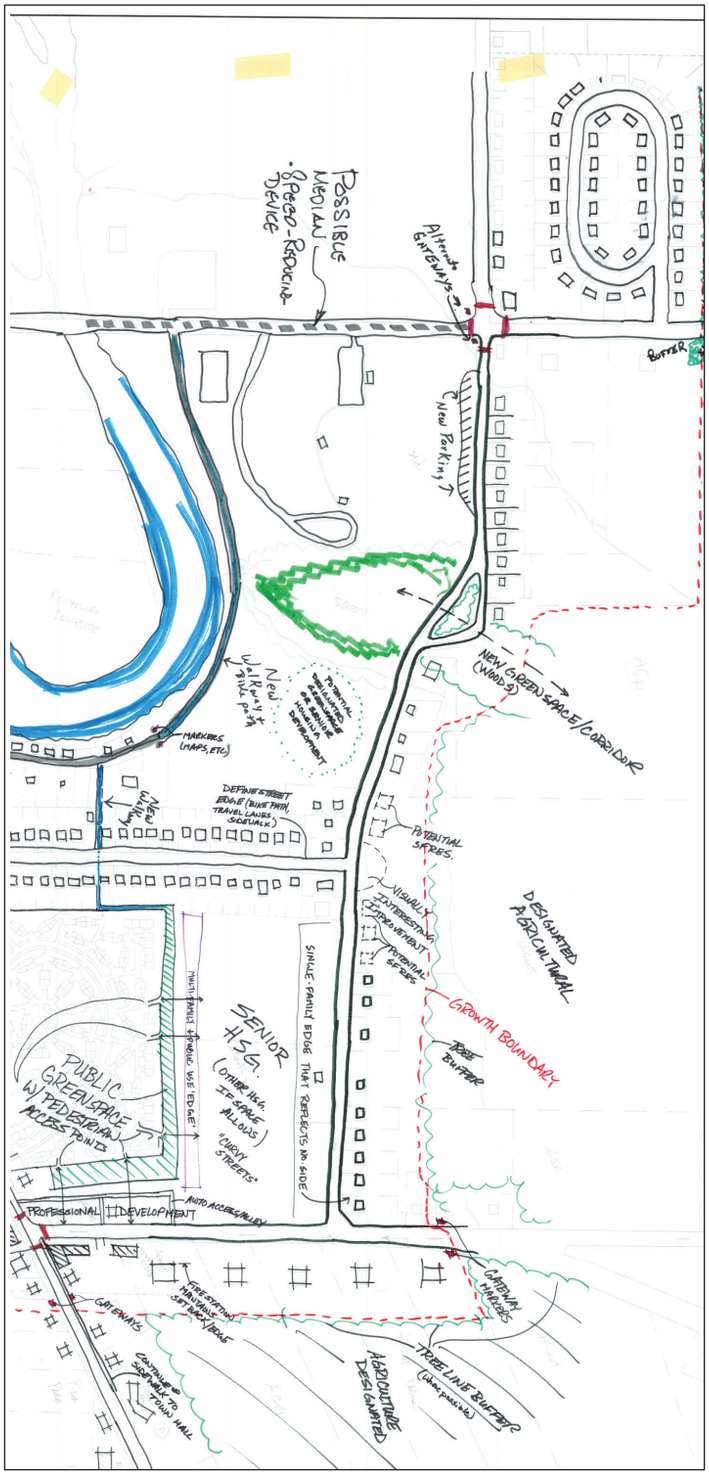
Create a linear, creek-side recreational park starting from the south side of the Vail-Sage Bridge and extending to the functioning railroad bridge.

Address pollution and tear down existing buildings in the Luster Coate area.

Build new apartment housing for Baker Street, and a trail with public facilities connecting the apartments with Main Street. The trail could follow the old railroad bed and connect Taylor Farms.

Transform the old firehouse into a community/youth center (with opportunities for skateboarding, basketball, etc.)

Make an ice rink with skate rentals and facilities for the park area, in addition to bringing back the boat launch to the area north of the skating rink.



Village Overlay Strategies

Focus Area 6: This area covers all land within a one mile radius of the Buffalo Road/ Main Street intersection.

Goals:

- Strengthen the village as a destination place, better develop the western gateway, and give attention to village periphery issues.

- Create a basis for physical plans including a district plan, a land-use plan, and a growth strategy plan.

- Outline some aesthetic design guidelines that express a unique village identity.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

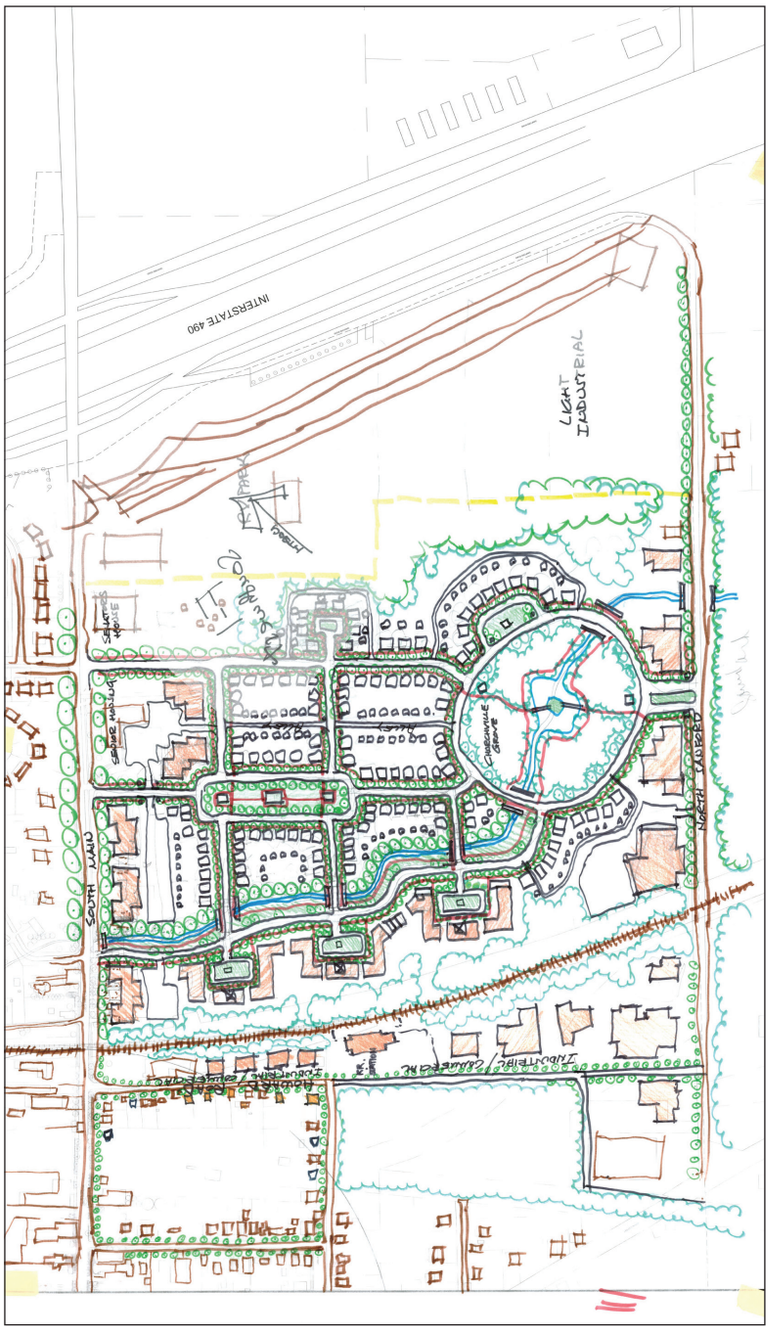
Use the 'Mill Wheel' theme as a common gateway feature.

Change the light-industrial use of land on Baker Street to residential use.

Change the light industrial use of land to commercial, creating an extension of the CBD, on Howard Avenue by the mill.

Bury the power lines.

Focus on the four gateways.



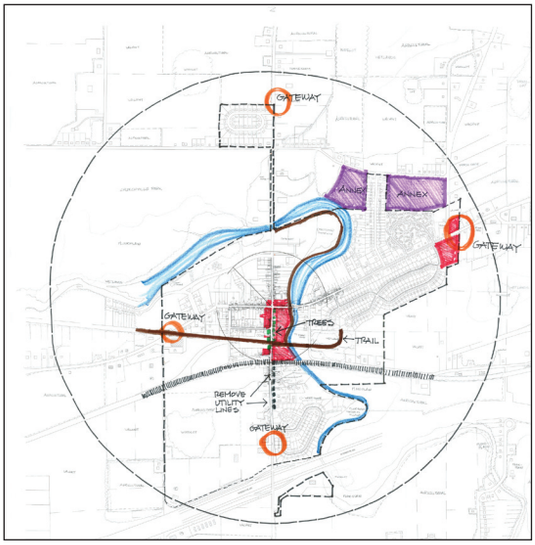
Post-Charrette Work, Phase 1: Vision Plan Development

After a charrette, ideas raised must be translated into design concepts that are shown on a physical plan, the "Vision Plan." During the first phase of Post-Charrette work for the Village of Churchville Vision Plan, the RRCDC Design Studio, in consultation with the village Steering Committee, discussed strategies for expressing the ideas raised at the charrette, prioritized those ideas and made initial decisions about what would be included in the physical plan.

A Vision Plan is important for a variety of reasons. It is drawn based on ideas that were generated at the charrette and is a documented record of those ideas and the resulting recommendations. Working in the format of an overall plan ensures continuity and coordination, effectively tying together improvements for individual parcels or blocks into an overall strategy for the corridor. The plan is a useful document that the community can employ when engaging the necessary groups and individuals to support the vision and go forward with development. Having a plan available is valuable for the community to refer to when issues come up regarding planning and zoning. It serves as a planning tool and as a map for short and long term project development and implementation.

On October 25, 2006, a public meeting was held at Village Hall for a Vision Plan draft review, which was attended by over 120 community members. The meeting gave attendees a chance to review draft Vision Plans and to discuss concepts for the final plans. Members of the RRCDC Design Studio and Steering Committee presented the draft plans, and then dialogued with community members to gain feedback. The response was overwhelmingly in favor of what was presented. The final renderings and Vision Plan incorporate that feedback.

The Vision Plan: Introduction



The Vision Plan for the Village of Churchville is comprised of the final plans, renderings, and written descriptions that are provided in the next section of this report.

The Charrette Area Plan depicts the three main sections of the village - the Black Creek Natural Resource Area, the Southwest Quadrant and the Central Business District. A fourth drawing, "Village Overlay Strategies", examines the village and its surroundings. Each of the four drawings, labeled A through D, presents proposed improvements and design strategies. The drawings are color coded with a legend provided to indicate the type of development or enhancement intended by each color. Elevation and perspective drawings are provided where appropriate to indicate how the proposed changes would look from a user's perspective.

The major proposed improvements are outlined in written form to accompany and explain the drawings.

Vision Plan Overview

Creating a Sense of Place
The Vision Plan calls for the establishment of an identity system for various areas within the village. The CBD, for example, might feature a theme that would be reinforced by color, design and decorative elements and plantings and landscaping. The theme could draw from unique aspects of Churchville's history, perhaps including the railroads, the beanery, Black Creek and the mills.

Establishing Attractive Gateways
Gateway features located at the outer boundaries of the village to announce entry and welcome people should be established in 5 key places that were identified during the charrette. Within the village, 4 gateways were suggested for locations closer to the center of the village to indicate transition into the denser core of Churchville. The gateways, especially to the village center, draw much of their effectiveness by utilizing already existing natural features. For example, the gateways on Main Street take advantage of the hills leading up and down into the center; another gateway is integrated into the Black Creek crossing on Route 33/36.

Enhancing Recreational Space
Ideas were raised about enhancing existing recreational opportunities offered by the village. A new dock on Black Creek, more walking and biking trails, and a new community center and amphitheater, are among the proposals for more community recreational space. Plans are also being made to lease part of Churchville Park adjacent to the village border.

Redeveloping Vacant Property
Open and vacant property within the village will be reassessed and redeveloped; the southwest quadrant of the village in particular.

Improve Accessibility and Connections
A variety of new streets, parking areas and trail systems are proposed to provide greater connections between and access to the village's business and recreational assets, residential areas and areas for proposed developments.

Preserve Open Space Outside of the Village
Specific lands have been designated for "future growth" with strategies for development, while other areas are preserved as "limited development" or "agricultural" areas.

Design for the Pedestrian
In addition to façade work on the main streets and other aesthetic considerations, improved parking strategies, bump outs, and raised crosswalks are proposed.

Color Legend

Drawing A:
Village Overlay Strategies

Existing Conditions

This focus area provides a growth strategy for the entire village. The primary concerns in this area include designating future growth areas, and indicating property to be annexed by the village thus outlining new village boundaries. The village center is located at the intersection is formed where Buffalo Road crosses Main Street, the two primary business corridors. Dense residential neighborhoods extend along Buffalo Road east and west and along the north side of Main Street. The northern section of the village, which features many recreational opportunities, is bounded by Creekside Cemetery, Churchville Park and Black Creek which winds down through the eastern half of the village. The southwest quadrant contains open land which could be potentially developed creating new neighborhoods and supporting facilities.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing A:

Create a Unique Village Identity

Common Design Theme – The Vision Plan reccomends devising a unique design theme to provide visual continuity in the village center. The design would include unifying schemes of color, design, signage and theme shared coordinated and reflected in the buildings and streetscapes.

Establish Effective Gateways

Inner and Outer Gateways – Five entrance markers would be strategically placed in areas where the village boundaries occur: two on Main Street, including one 3/4 mile north of the village center, and another 1/2 mile south of the village center; two on Route 33, at the western and eastern village edges; and a fifth at Washington Street near an existing horse farm. Four new gateway markers signify entry into the CBD: two on Buffalo Road and two on Main Street.

Preserve Open Space Outside of the Village

Town Green Space – Preservation of green space is proposed for all designated areas outside of the village boundaries. This includes woods, wetlands, and agricultural land. As part of a strategic land-use plan, several areas of open land in sites within the village boundaries are slated for future building development.

Green Buffer – A small “green buffer” spans from east to west across Main Street just north of Hutton Circle.

Drawing A

Annexation Strategy - In the Vision Plan, green dashed lines indicate new village boundaries and suggested properties for annexation. By incorporating these lands into the village, Churchville will be better able to regulate and direct development in the annexed areas.

Build New and Enhance Existing Recreational Space

Multipath Recreational Trails – Intricately designed trails encircling the village center are added to improve accessibility and connections, particularly from a pedestrian or cyclist perspective. The trails highlight some of Churchville's most engaging features, tracing along the western bank of Black Creek, passing through the village center and winding in and out of woodlands. The trail system leads to sites of interest including the existing boat launch, the ice rink, and the proposed amphitheatre and community center. A connected but separate trail traces the eastern bank of Black Creek, exploring open space and wetlands east of the village center.

Community Center and Amphitheatre - An amphitheater and community recreation center are placed along the southern bank of Black Creek, bordering on North Main Street just north of the existing school. The community center and amphitheater share a drop-off loop and parking lot which will be shared with the school for large events.

Public Parks – Churchville Park and the floodplain just north of Black Creek are preserved. Other floodplains preserved include a second south of Savage Road and north of I-490, and a third floodplain deeded to the village within its boundaries, adjacent to the second floodplain.

Drawing B:
Central Business District

Existing Conditions

The current CBD, concentrated around the intersection of Main Street and Route 33, contains historic buildings (Bean & Bin, Star of the West, and several churches) and traditional vernacular architecture reflected in the old homes along Main Street as well as intersecting streets of Fitch Street, North Street, and Howard Avenue. These narrower residential streets contain older houses and tall trees creating somewhat of a canopy effect. Newer developments include Churchville Greene and other housing developments, the new Village Center, and "Churchville Commons", a dense commercial landing offering smaller shops, a post office, library and more. Along this stretch of Main Street the power lines are buried and elegant light poles line the sidewalks.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing B:

Improve Accessibility and Connections

New Street Along Black Creek – A new two way street is proposed, to alleviate traffic in the village core, provide better public access to Black Creek and bring commercial interests to the water's edge. The new street parallels Black Creek for two blocks in the north/south direction, beginning at Route 33 and running south toward the old railroad crossing, where the proposed street curves west to intersect with South Main Street.

Parking Strategy – New and reconfigured off-street parking in the village is propsed, out of view from the street. Parallel parking is formalized along the Main Street and Route 33/36. Measures to reduce and control stormwater runoff, such as the use of bio-retention soils, are proposed for new parking lots to reduce pollution.

Design for the Pedestrian

Sidewalk Public Realm Enhancements – Existing tree lines will be enhanced along Main Street, Route 33/36, and the smaller side streets in the village. Along the main sidewalks additional trees will be added, along with coordinated shrubs and/or flowerbeds that reflect the village design and color theme. Façade treatment is proposed for a number of the buildings in the CBD.

Drawing B

Crosswalks and Bump outs – Raised crosswalks, of a material differing from the road, are placed at all intersections of Main Street within the CBD. Bump outs are placed along Main Street and Route 33/36.

Pedestrian Footbridge – A new pedestrian footbridge crosses Black Creek where there currently exists the old trestle and stone monument. This bridge would connect the Churchville Commons commercial site to the other side of the creek.

Establish Effective Gateways

Village Center Gateways – Four Village Center Gateways are proposed, each using signage and other architectural entry features (monuments, or even literal gateways) to denote the cross into the village. The northern gateway plays off of the natural hill on North Main Street, wedged between Churchville Park and the village boundary at the cemetery. The southern gateway is found just after the railroad tracks, northbound on Main Street. Again, it draws effectiveness from a preexisting physical boundary. As a major part of Churchville's history, the railroad tracks would be directly incorporated as one of the entry features. The western gateway is found at the intersection of North Street and Route 33/Buffalo Rd., and the eastern village gateway is on Route 33 just before crossing Black Creek.

Build New and Enhance Existing Recreational Space

Dock on Black Creek- A fishing platform currently exists on the west side of Black Creek, with a head-on view of the dam. Another platform will be built just north of this existing one. These two platforms will connect to the park lands to the north of the village by a recreational trail along Black Creek.

Walking Trail on Old Rail Bed – A new walking trail is proposed along the old railroad lines, cutting through the village center in an east/west direction. The trail would follow the existing West Shore Tracks bed that crosses Baker St, Black Creek (over the proposed footbridge), Main Street, and North Street.

Redevelop Vacant Property

Vacant Lots to Commercial Use – An empty lot exists between Krony's Pizza and the Goodyear building. It could be developed, perhaps used for a new commercial building that would stand right up to the sidewalk line, filling in a gap on Main Street.

Drawing C:
North Black Creek & Recreation

Existing Conditions

Drawing C focuses on the northern section of the village where Black Creek flows between Churchville County Park and the current northern village border. Churchville is fortunate to have two significant recreational resources, Churchville Park and Black Creek, in this area. Churchville Park, a county park, lies along the banks of Black Creek at the north end of the village. It includes a golf course, sports fields and other recreational facilities. Churchville's annual Lions Club Country Fair is held there each August and snowmobilers utilize the park in the winter. An ice rink and "Church Lodge" sit across Main Street from the village cemetery against the southern bank of Black Creek and the Sprucewood Nature Center, a minipark and trail system are located in proximity to the creek. The creek has both wide calm waters and narrow rushing waters, which lend themselves to various kinds of water-based recreational opportunities, all within easy walking distance of most areas of the village. Much of the land abutting Black Creek is already protected from development.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing C:

Preserve Open Space Outside of the Village

A village can be described as a neighborhood or small group of neighborhoods freestanding in the countryside. Churchville is one of the few villages in Monroe County that still fits this description. The Vision Plan identifies lands within the village and around the perimeter of the village that should be preserved, as well as areas within the village that should be designated for future growth. The goal is to maintain Churchville as a village with a clear distinction between the village and the rural landscape surrounding the village.

Green Space Preserve – A green-space preserve is proposed for a site south of Route 33/36, west of Baker Street and just east of Black Creek. A propoal for an abutment at Black Creek is included.

Forever Wild Preserve - A wooded area in the north end of the village, located at the large bend in Black Creek, is proposed to be designated as a forever wild area. The proposed trail system follows the creek shore in this area and connects to existing trails near the cemetery. This area when combined with the cemetery and Churchville Park creates a very large green preserve at the north end of the village.

Limited Development Zones - As indicated in the Village Overlay Strategy, the open-space preservation proposal designates a number of areas around the perimeter of the village as

limited development zones. These zones would be areas with strong restrictions on development. The intent is to concentrate future development into areas within easy walking distance of the village center, to reinforce the economy of the village center and preserve the distinction between the village and countryside.

Build New and Enhance Existing Recreational Space

Trail System – A proposed trail system, based around Black Creek, will connect the existing boat launch and cemetery with the proposed recreational complex and existing "Olmsted Pavillion." Along Black Creek the trail leads to several "look-out points" where Churchville's scenic natural attractions can be admired. Several spurs off the main trails along Black Creek connect to residential neighborhoods and the village center. The old railroad bridge just south of the village center would be restored as part of the trail system to link both sides of Black Creek.

Black Creek Recreational Facilities – A new community center is proposed for a site just west of North Main Street and south of Black, near the the existing skating rink. An outdoor amphitheater is also proposed for this site. These two structures, along with the existing skating rink, form an important recreational complex, which will be served by a common parking area and will be linked to the nearby elementary school by a portion of the trail system. The site will be landscaped to maintain a naturalistic park-like setting.

Churchville Park Property – County park property along the southern bank of Black Creek, including the existing boat launch, may be leased to the village. This will enable the village to provide improved recreational services, such as canoe and kayak rentals and food service.

Sports Fields – Additional sports fields are proposed for sites within the Churchville Park property in the vicinity of the boat launch.

Black Creek Dock & Boardwalk – A dock is proposed for a site just north of the dam near East Buffalo Street (Route 36), within easy walking distance of the village center. In addition to the dock, the proposed trail along the west bank of Black Creek would be built as a boardwalk to cross wetland areas with minimal disturbance.

Drawing D:
Southwest Village Growth

Existing Conditions

To the immediate southwest of the CBD, the area designated for future growth is bound to the east by South Main Street and to the west by the current village border. This plot is currently under agricultural cultivation and contains a standing woodlot in its southwest quadrant.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing D:

This area has been identified in the Vision Plan as a Designated Growth Area. By directing growth toward this designated area within walking distance of the CBD and contiguous to existing development, Churchville will be able to contain future growth to maintain the village-scale characteristics of its built enivornment while also preserving open space around the village edges. In addition to the plot's proximity to the CBD it is also a suitable size for future development of a new neighborhood. The proposed neighborhood contains an interconnected street network allowing for denser development, while incorporating park-like features to maintain a rural feel.

Creating a Sense of Place

Park Features and Green Space - The proposed residential neighborhood provides many park-like features to offer a rural feel. A small creek flows through the development, all streets are lined with trees and some curving roads and open green spaces add to the feeling of quiet country living. An existing stand of trees is preserved as a park and enhanced by interconnected footpaths to provide accessibility.

Housing Arrangement - A variety of housing types and settings are offered within the new neighborhood. Townhouses, closely set single-family homes on gridded streets, and larger houses off of cul-de-sac streets are among the residential choices that citizens will have within this southwest village neighborhood.

Parking - The proposed parking arrangements are designed so as to be hidden from view of the street. In the townhouse projects, parking is tucked behind the houses against a proposed green buffer. Other parking spaces are screened by greenery or located behind building developments, such as proposed for the senior living center additions.

Redeveloping Vacant Property

Senior Living Center Expansion- The existing senior living center on South Main Street is expanded to nearly twice its present size. The new wing is built in the same style and context of the exisiting

Drawing D

facility. The finished complex would present an expanded facade to viewers on South Main Street, while hiding parking in the back. Sidewalks connect the living center with the rest of the proposed neighborhood, and seniors would only need to walk a block or two before relaxing at one of the open green sites within the development.

Improving Accessibility and Connections

Interconnected Street Network - The new development contains a network of streets which roughly follow a grid pattern, while incorporating some meandering roads and cul-de-sacs to provide for a variety of residential settings. The street pattern is intended to provide the easy connectivity and navigability of traditional neighborhood developments.

Preserve Open Space Outside the Village

The proximity of this new development to the village center (within 1/2 mile) allows for a more sustainable, walkable, and closer-knit community while reducing development pressure on the open space outside the village growth boundary. This arrangement is intended to be mutually beneficial for the commercial interests in the village core and the new residents who will live in the neighborhood.

Green Buffer - A large green buffer is proposed to extend along the north edge of the new southwest residential development, contiguous with the existing railroad tracks, bound on the east by South Main Street (Route 36) and on the west by Sanford Road. An enclosing green buffer on the southern edge of the development is also proposed.

Design for the Pedestrian

Sidewalks and Footpaths - Sidewalks line each street, and connect with footpaths leading to open green spaces within the neighborhood.

Bump outs and Raised Crosswalks - Bump outs are proposed for several of the streets around open park areas, and raised crosswalks are found throughout the new development.

Neighborhood Creek Walkways - Footpaths are introduced on either side of an existing creek running through the project from east to west, widening into small ponds at several locations. Many small footbridges are proposed to cross at four different points within the development.

Post Charrette Work, Phase 2: Implementation

During the upcoming implementation phase, the Churchville Steering Committee, the Village of Churchville, and active citizens will embark on the process of transforming the Village of Churchville Vision Plan into a reality. The following section of the report provides recommendations from the RRCDC regarding how Churchville can achieve this. Though more complex than the charrette process, the implementation phase may be approached in a similar manner. To accomplish the major goals set forth, Churchville will need to utilize strategic planning, engagement of community members, and formulation of partnerships and collaborations. Outcomes of the implementation phase are contingent on priorities set by the community in response to the vision plan.

In turning the vision plan into a reality, Churchville will find it imperative to capitalize on the enthusiasm generated during the charrette and the first post-charrette phase and extend public participation into the planning and implementation process. Community members should be encouraged to act on the ideas that they themselves generated and to invest in the neighborhood's revitalization. Community members can be engaged through public meetings, workshops and presentations, and should be kept updated through written publications i.e. emails, the local newspaper or newsletter, etc. They should have opportunities to provide input or to become actively engaged in a subcommittee to contribute towards design of the public realm and the shape of their community in the future.

Recommendations for Implementation

The Churchville Vision Plan sets a direction for the future of the village and includes a number of specific proposals for public and private improvements and future development. Implementation of the elements of the plan will require concerted efforts from both the public and private sectors and public/private partnerships. The recommendations contained within the Vision Plan should be categorized as projects, programs or initiatives, and prioritized for short-term, mid-term or long-term implementation.

Steering Group

During the Charrette and Post Charrette Phase planning processes, the Village of Churchville Steering Committee helped to coordinate activities, communication between various groups and individuals involved, and to provide other input. The RRCDC recommends that this Steering Committee continue to be involved to help guide the strategic planning, development activities, and program initiative efforts during the Implementation Phase. This group will oversee, review, make decisions and provide cohesiveness to the revitalization of the village.

Recommended Changes to Existing Regulations

In light of the pending completion of this Vision Plan and expected proposals for development in the village center, the Village Board enacted a moratorium on development and asked the RRCDC to make recommendations for changes to the village's zoning ordinance to help guide growth in the village center. RRCDC has recommended the creation of a new Village Center District, which will have a code that includes many of the concepts found in some of the most advanced form-based codes that have been adopted around the country. The text for this new district is currently undergoing review and revision. RRCDC recommends that an accompanying commentary and guide, with graphic illustrations, be produced to make it easy for property owners and potential developers to understand exactly what the village requires in the central district. The code for the new Village Center District will require updating as key recommendations of this Vision Plan are implemented, especially the construction of new streets as shown in Drawing D.

RRCDC also recommends, as a long-term goal, a joint project with the Town of Riga to adopt a transect-based and form-based code, such as the Smart Code, to replace the conventional zoning codes currently in place in both municipalities. This will better enable both municipalities to codify the recommendations of this Vision Plan and the new, joint Town of Riga/Village of Churchville Comprehensive Plan, both of which seek to preserve the village as a freestanding neighborhood in the countryside. Transect-based codes recognize that there are different kinds of human habitats, ranging from the most rural to

the most urban, and code for the character of each kind of habitat. This results in different kinds of places for people to choose from at different points in their lives. In order to adopt such a code, the town and village would need to hire a consultant with the expertise and authorization to calibrate the code to local conditions. This Vision Plan and the new joint Town of Riga/Village of Churchville Comprehensive Plan give the village and town a head start on achieving this goal.

Public Improvements

Some of the proposals in the Village of Churchville Vision Plan involve improvements to publicly owned infrastructure and lands, especially improvements to streets and sidewalks, the further development of the trail system and the development of new and improved recreational facilities. The steering group will need to devise a strategy to persuade the involved agencies (i.e. the Village of Churchville, Town of Riga, County of Monroe and State of New York) to implement portions of the plan over time. Some of these plans may be implemented as part of the normal capital improvement process, while others may require extra lobbying to bring to completion. Some acquisition of private property or easements across private property may also be required. The steering group should make an effort to assemble an advisory group made up of local and state officials who can help jumpstart this process.

Improvements to Private Property

New development, renovation and restoration should follow design principles that will help preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the village and its public realm. As outlined above, a new Village Center District will be added to the zoning ordinance that will provide design guidelines and standards for new and existing construction within the village center. Outside the village center there is also a large number of architecturally and historically significant structures. RRCDC recommends that the village commission a village-wide historic resources survey as a possible first step toward the adoption of a historic preservation component within the zoning ordinance. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can provide assistance with model preservation ordinances. The ordinance may designate individual landmark buildings or may establish historic districts. The village may also wish to include village-wide design guidelines and standards to govern some of the most critical aspects of building design as it relates to the public realm. These guidelines and standards should be kept as minimal as possible to ensure that they are enforceable and effective. RRCDC is able to provide technical assistance for the development of such guidelines and standards. In new development areas, such as the new neighborhood shown in Drawing D, the village should require developers to develop standards for new construction subject to approval

by the village. Such standards might take the form of pattern books or other graphic forms similar to those that have been used in New Urbanist greenfield developments around the country. The RRCDC can provide assistance in evaluating such standards.

Development on Main Street

There is room for significant expansion of the central business district along South Main Street and proposals are expected for the redevelopment of the service station on the northeast corner of Main Street and East Buffalo Street and adjacent properties. In recognition of this, the village has enacted a development moratorium to allow for the revision of the zoning code affecting this area as discussed above. This zoning revision should be seen as a short-term solution, which may remain in effect as long as the current street configuration remains unchanged. A major proposal of the Vision Plan is the construction of a new street, parallel to South Main Street, along Black Creek, with small streets that connect this new street to South Main Street. This will create new blocks with sites designated for new buildings, parklands and parking areas. As plans for these new streets and blocks progress, a revision of the Village Center District code will become necessary. This revision should include a regulating plan that designates new streets and parks and designates where different types of buildings are permitted and the location of off-street parking areas. The regulating plan should also indicate where retail frontage is mandatory, optional or not permitted. This will not govern the uses within the buildings, but will govern the design of the building frontages. The regulations governing new construction should also be revised to address each of the building types permitted in the district.

The steering group can recommend a strategy for construction of the new streets and blocks, which will require the acquisition of private property. They will also need to recommend a parking strategy. While the Vision Plan envisions the provision of as much on-street parking as possible, off-street parking will also be necessary. The parking strategy will need to address the issue of whether off-street parking is owned by the village, is privately owned or is developed jointly by neighboring property owners.

The service stations at the corners of Main and Buffalo Streets are non-conforming uses under the current zoning and under the proposed Village Center District. While the Vision Plan includes a proposal for reconfigured service stations with buildings anchoring the corners and fuel dispensing operations in the rear, it is unclear if this can legally be accomplished, as it would require the demolition and reconstruction of the existing non-conforming uses. If the village's legal counsel provides an opinion that such reconstruction is possible, the RRCDC is able to provide design guidelines and standards for these sites.

Residential Development

The Vision Plan designates a number of undeveloped sites in close proximity to the village center for new residential development. The largest of these sites is located in the southwest quadrant of the village, shown in Drawing D. These developments should follow the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and become true neighborhoods rather than “developments” or “subdivisions.” These neighborhoods should be relatively dense (comparable to the older streets in Churchville) and should be walkable and connected to the village center and each other. New neighborhoods should provide choices of different housing types, public squares, parks and other open spaces, and access to the trail system and recreational areas. The steering group is advised to devise a strategy to ensure that new development in these areas follows TND principles. This may require changes to the zoning ordinance, some type of incentives or even the adoption of official maps that designate future streets, parks, trails and building lots.

Trail System

The Vision Plan includes an extensive trail system, centered around Black Creek, with connections to other areas within the village. It is recommended that the trail system be extended to areas of the town beyond the village limits in order to connect to other trail networks and provide Churchville/ Riga with unparalleled recreational opportunities.

Summary and Conclusions

Planning, carrying out, and following up the Village of Churchville Charrette have been parts of a worthy process helping community members take steps towards setting and achieving goals for their neighborhood. The physical plans and written recommendations presented in this report will provide the Steering Committee and members of the surrounding neighborhoods with a concrete record of the ideas that community members developed during the visioning stages and will provide a guide to follow as the community proceeds with the revitalization efforts. The Vision Plan presented here must be followed up with action during the upcoming implementation phase in order to become reality. The upcoming steps will be exciting but perhaps even more difficult than the initial visioning stages of the process.

The Charrette and Post Charrette Processes described in the previous pages will serve not only as a guide for development but also as a model for other communities seeking to revitalize or plan for their future. Communities of many types can follow this basic model of engaging citizens, forging new community relationships, exploring the physical and social aspects of their area, and working together to develop consensus towards a Community Based Vision Plan. Communities that engage in the charrette process will often discover that simply embarking upon this process will lead to the emergence of many unexpected yet welcome long-term effects.

A Community-Based Vision Plan for the Village of Churchville

Produced by the
Rochester Regional Community Design Center

RRCDC
ROCHESTER REGIONAL
COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER